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REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION, PURSUANT TO ARTICLE 22, PARAGRAPHS 2 (a) AND 2 (b), AND ARTICLE 26 OF THE CONVENTION

REVIEW OF REPORTS ON IMPLEMENTATION OF AFFECTED AFRICAN COUNTRY PARTIES, INCLUDING ON THE PARTICIPATORY PROCESS, AND ON EXPERIENCE GAINED AND RESULTS ACHIEVED IN THE PREPARATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF NATIONAL ACTION PROGRAMMES

PROGRESS IN THE FORMULATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF SUBREGIONAL ACTION PROGRAMMES AND THE REGIONAL ACTION PROGRAMME IN AFRICA

Note by the secretariat

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Introduction

1. This report is submitted to the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention pursuant to article 22, paragraphs 2 (a) and 2 (b), and article 26 of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. Following the guidelines given in decision 11/COP.1, paragraph 10 (b), and decision 1/COP.5, the Convention secretariat has produced this document to summarize progress at the subregional and regional levels in Africa. The document is based on information given in national reports; it is structured around the seven key thematic topics defined by the Conference of the Parties at its fifth session in paragraph 10 of decision 1/COP.5, dated 12 October 2001.

2. As regards the progress of the subregional action programmes, an initial summary (ICCD/COP (3) /5/Add.5) was submitted to the Conference of the Parties at its third session on the basis of an initial series of reports produced in May 1999. The information in the current summary comes from the second series of reports submitted in April 2002 by the intergovernmental organizations serving as focal points or liaison centres for subregional activities: the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU), the Permanent Inter-State Committee on Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS), the Economic Union of West African States (ECOWAS), the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC), the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), and the Southern African Development Community (SADC). The full reports as submitted by these organizations may be consulted on the secretariat website (www.unccd.int).

3. As regards the regional action programme, the report basically describes progress since the submission of the first report in 1999.

I. SUMMARY OF REPORTS ON THE PROCESSES RELATING TO THE SUBREGIONAL ACTION PROGRAMMES AND THE REGIONAL ACTION PROGRAMME

A. Subregional action programmes

4. There follow below summaries of progress in the formulation and implementation of the subregional action programmes in the five subregions (West Africa, Central Africa, northern Africa, East Africa and southern Africa) referred to in article 10 of Annex I to the Convention on regional implementation in Africa.

1. West Africa and Chad

5. CILSS and ECOWAS, as liaison centres for implementation of the subregional action programme in West Africa and Chad, have taken important steps which have enabled them to make significant progress. Mention should be made, in particular, of the establishment of a special unit to monitor and guide programme implementation, and action in support of the two institutions' member countries' efforts to formulate and implement national action programmes. Another important activity has been the taking of steps to facilitate the mobilization of financial resources. Special efforts have been made to establish partnerships in support of subregional programme implementation. A number of interesting steps have been taken to boost the role of

civil society in the implementation of the Convention and spur the activities of the thematic groups. Member countries and CILSS have also striven to provide financial support for activities under the subregional action programme.

2. Central Africa

6. Implementation of the Convention in this subregion is in a somewhat special situation because the various parties involved are not sufficiently attuned to the nature and process of desertification. Desertification is, nonetheless, a reality in Central Africa. The subregion still does not have a subregional action programme, and surveying developments of note in order to make an evaluation is not at all easy. CEMAC, which is coordinating the implementation process in the subregion, has embarked on some initial large-scale activities to capture the attention of subregional political bodies.

3. Northern Africa

7. AMU, which is coordinating the process on behalf of its member countries, has made great efforts to launch projects, canvassing development partners for financial and technical support. Two national action programmes and the subregional programme for the Maghreb were developed and endorsed by gatherings held between 1999 and 2001. The report makes particular mention of a variety of initiatives in the Maghreb including the establishment of a subregional coordinating body, stronger emphasis on a participatory approach, the creation of a subregional information and database system, the execution of transboundary projects, and cooperation with research institutions and CILSS.

4. East Africa

8. IGAD has launched over 27 projects in programmes in the course of implementing the subregional action programme; many of their components are concerned with desertification control and drought alleviation. Many of the activities under the subregional programme are being run in partnership with developed-country parties and international organizations. A number of matters of importance for the implementation of the Convention, including the participatory approach involving civil society in particular, are also being taken into account during the formulation and execution of projects in the main priority areas of the subregional programme.

5. Southern Africa

9. The report from SADC stresses the various actions undertaken since the submission of the first report in 1999: these relate in the main to the mobilization of resources following two workshops staged for the purpose in 2000 and 2001. It gives an account of activities in capacity-building, the development of information systems, and the financing mechanisms that must be set up to facilitate implementation of the subregional programme. Among the lessons learned from subregional programme implementation, it mentions the need for lasting partnership agreements between the various parties involved and for linkages between the various multilateral environment-related agreements.

B. The regional action programme

10. The reports emphasize that, since the activities summarized in the document submitted to the Conference of the Parties at its third session, in 1999 (ACCD/COP (3) /5/Add.5), the main activity carried out under the regional programme has been the launching of three thematic programme networks over the biennium 2000-2001:

(a) Integrated water resource management in the great river, lake and transboundary hydrogeological basins in Africa;

(b) Agroforestry and soil conservation; and

(c) Rational rangeland management and promotion of forage crops.

11. There are plans to launch three further networks over the biennium 2002-2003. These activities have taken place thanks to financial support from a variety of bilateral and multilateral partners. A number of meetings on the regional programme process have been held to integrate the programme formulation process into a number of other ongoing initiatives in the region.

II. PROGRESS REPORT ON THE SUBREGIONAL ACTION PROGRAMMES

A. West Africa and Chad

1. Areas of cooperation under the programme and measures taken or planned

12. The goal of the West Africa and Chad subregional action programme to combat desertification, adopted in December 1999 at the Summit of Heads of State or Government of the CILSS and ECOWAS member countries, is to boost the efficiency of the national action programmes by developing subregional cooperation in the management of shared or transboundary natural resources within the region in the spirit of the Convention. The subregional programme was designed to provide strategic guidance and consistency in desertification control activities by the governmental and non-governmental entities involved in the 17 countries the programme covers.

13. Eight main areas for intervention have been identified. They are coordinated by subregional intergovernmental or non-governmental organizations serving as line managers:

(a) sustainable management of shared water resources;

(b) sustainable management of shared plant and animal resources;

(c) sustainable development of energy resources;

(d) efforts to combat pests affecting crops and forest species;

(e) early warning of drought and mitigation of its impact;

(f) scientific and technical cooperation;

(g) information, training and communication; and

(h) development of trade in local products within the region.

14. Efforts since the submission of first report in 1999 have concentrated on collaboration among members of the first seven thematic groups listed above. Discussions have covered activities under way in each area, action to be taken by each member and additional activities needing to be identified. Work on quantifying the various activities and estimating their costs is in progress, as is the identification of possible partners. A number of steps relating to the implementation of the subregional programme have been taken by the various subregional entities involved: arranging workshops on topics of importance for the Convention, conducting facilitation surveys, providing organizational support, designing and launching specific projects and programmes, executing training modules, etc.

15. Transboundary desertification control projects undertaken under the heading of CILSS/AMU cooperation, with support from a variety of partners, since the entry into force of the Convention have made up the bulk of efforts to restore degraded land and set up early warning systems. Parallel data collection and analysis and the integration of biophysical, spatial, cartographic, statistical and descriptive data are enabling forecasting and early warning models in the subregion to be updated.

16. At the initiative of CILSS and ECOWAS, an information circulation system has been developed. A West African Internet-based environmental monitoring and follow-up system (SISEI-AO) web site is being set up and will be of interest to all who have anything to do with the environment in West Africa. Although initially intended to spread information about efforts to combat desertification, there are also plans to open up the site to questions relating to other environment-related agreements, such as the conventions on climate change, biodiversity and wetlands.

2. Consultative process in support of the preparation and implementation of the subregional action programme and partnership agreements concluded with the developed countries or other interested entities

17. The West African subregional programme provides a permanent framework for coordination, and a variety of advisory and collaborative bodies have been set up. Since the submission of the subregion's first report, the Summit of Heads of State or Government has met, in December 1999, to adopt the subregional action programme; the subregional coordinating committee met in 1999 and 2000, discussing topics such as synergy between the conventions and resource mobilization. The members of the eight thematic networks have also been in consultation.

18. Under the auspices of CILSS and ECOWAS, the subregion has contacted a variety of development partners with a view to involving them more thoroughly in the implementation of the Convention at the subregional and national levels. Partnerships have been established with bilateral and multilateral partners. Cooperation over research and development, the definition of impact indicators and the execution of transboundary projects has also been arranged with several African subregional organizations.

3. Financial allocations by affected country parties of the subregion in support of the implementation of the Convention and technical and financial assistance received or sought, with an indication of needs and order of priority

19. Few West African subregional institutions set aside any of their own resources over the period 2000-2001 to finance subregional action programme activities. The report mentions that CILSS was supported in its efforts by a variety of bilateral partners.

20. In response to decision 9/COP.3, a subregional workshop on approaches to resource mobilization was held in Senegal in April 2002 with support from the Global Mechanism. One of the decisions reached was to set up a facilitation fund that CILSS would manage for the benefit of the subregion; seed resources made available through the Global Mechanism will help support the implementation of the Convention in the subregion.

21. Various other efforts to facilitate resource mobilization, such as workshops and surveys, have been undertaken in the search for synergy among the environment-related conventions and as part of moves to take national action programmes into account in the strategic setting of poverty reduction activities.

4. Consideration and evaluation of benchmarks and indicators used to measure progress

22. The system for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the West African subregional action programme being a matter whose importance is recognized by all concerned, a series of indicators have been developed for monitoring programme implementation and assessing the impact of the steps taken and actions carried out. Responsibility for applying them lies with the liaison centres (CILSS and ECOWAS) and the thematic line managers. Only the part assigned to the CILSS Regional Centre for Training and Application in Agrometeorology and Operational Hydrology (AGRHYMET) - collection of climatological, hydrological, farming, agrometeorological, phytosanitary, pastoral and demographic data and State capacity-building in areas including the introduction of drought and desertification early warning systems - has actually been carried out, however.

B. Central Africa

1. Areas of cooperation under the programme and measures taken or planned

23. Given the very little progress made in implementing the programme, nationally and subregionally, in the Central African subregion, capacity-building by providing technical and financial support remains the main concern. This is true both of the countries concerned and of the CEMAC secretariat which is responsible for promoting and coordinating implementation of the Convention in the subregion. The lack of a specialized subregional environmental institution capable of channelling national efforts to give effect to the Convention remains a major obstacle.

2. Consultative process in support of the implementation of the subregional action programme and partnership agreements concluded with developed country parties and other interested entities

24. As part of the Convention implementation process in central Africa, informal consultations have been held with political officials, development partners and local inhabitants. CEMAC has developed a framework for cooperation in partnership matters with its six member countries. Other agreements with subregional and international institutions are under negotiation. One of the major problems with the implementation of the Convention is the lack of awareness of how real a threat desertification poses to the subregion. The need for public information and awareness activities is patent.

3. Financial allocations to support Convention implementation by affected country parties of the subregion, and technical and financial assistance received or needed, with an indication of needs and order of priority

25. Neither CEMAC nor its member countries in central Africa have made any budgetary provision for implementing the Convention. Steps are being taken under environmental projects to combat land degradation, but not uniformly and without regard for the relevant provisions of the Convention. The report makes it clear that the subregion is heavily dependent on external support.

4. Consideration and evaluation of benchmarks and indicators used to measure progress

26. Given the current state of progress, no action has been taken at the subregional level to address this point.

C. Northern Africa

1. Areas of cooperation under the programme and measures taken or planned

27. The five member countries of AMU, which provides the institutional framework for regional integration, have begun work on the subregional action programme for the Maghreb, finalizing it in September 1999. They have selected six main areas for cooperation:

(a) circulation and exchange of information and data;

(b) encouragement of a climate favouring a participatory approach;

(c) improved knowledge of natural resources through research, popularization and access to new technology;

(d) desertification monitoring and evaluation;

(e) capacity-building, public education and public awareness activities; and

(f) local, subregional and interregional cooperation by means of pilot projects on the rational use of transboundary natural resources.

28. In carrying out this programme, AMU has laid particular stress on moves to guarantee the involvement of civil society in the subregional programme process. At the institutional level, it has set up a coordinating unit for the programme and is seeking financing to support its operation. A number of schemes and pilot projects to do with the restoration of degraded land, mapping of affected and sensitive areas, early drought warning, natural resource monitoring and the monitoring and evaluation of desertification by setting benchmarks and indicators are in progress.

2. Consultative process in support of the implementation of the subregional action programme and partnership agreements concluded with developed country parties and other interested entities

29. As part of the programme implementation process, a subregional project to promote the use of a participatory approach, seeking inter alia to increase the role played by civil society at all stages of the process and devise arrangements that might induce the principal players to become more involved in decision-making, has been launched.

30. As regards coordination, the mobilization of national and international resources and partnership agreements, AMU has sought cooperation with a variety of subregional, regional and international bodies. It is striving to foster the process of joint action-taking and the pooling of data, experience and results with the West African subregion, and to draw up research and development programmes.

31. To arrive at a common understanding of the implementation of the three conventions that emerged from the Rio Conference, and to boost exchanges of information and experience among the members of the Union, the AMU secretariat has set about organizing a subregional forum on synergies between the sustainable development conventions.

3. Financial allocations to support Convention implementation by affected country parties of the subregion, and technical and financial assistance received or needed, with an indication of needs and order of priority

32. Negotiations with a variety of bilateral and multilateral partners have resulted in agreements on assistance in financing subregional programme projects. An agreement has been signed between the Global Mechanism and the AMU secretariat to support the implementation of the subregional action programme in AMU member countries. Consultations between development partners, as part of the interregional programme for western Asia and northern Africa that was set in train by the Global Mechanism, were held in Syria in March 2002. These will, it is hoped, generate support for the efforts of AMU.

4. Consideration and evaluation of benchmarks and indicators used to measure progress

33. The introduction of a subregional round-the-clock ecosystems monitoring system is helping to improve understanding of desertification. Cooperation with the Sahara and Sahel Observatory (OSS) is intended to help countries in the subregion to set up a practical system for monitoring and evaluating the impact of desertification control programmes.

34. Numerous activities designed to give the AMU States the benefits of advanced technology have taken place over the course of the biennium 2001-2002. A number of workshops and seminars have defined practical ways of producing national maps indicating proneness to desertification and drought. A desertification information system in support of regional action programmes in the Mediterranean, DIS-MED, has been launched.

D. East Africa

1. Areas of cooperation under the programme and measures taken or planned

35. The subregional action programme for East Africa coordinated by the IGAD secretariat identifies nine priority areas for cooperation:

(a) development and management of transboundary natural resources;

(b) fostering a climate favourable to Convention implementation, especially at the legislative, institutional, economic and political levels;

(c) data collection, analysis and exchange;

(d) research and development;

(e) education and public awareness;

(f) coordination of programmes to develop alternative energy sources;

(g) cooperation in the management and control of pests, weeds, vectors of human and animal disease and diseases affecting animals and plants;

(h) early warning systems and joint plans for mitigating the effects of drought; and

(i) capacity-building.

36. In the implementation of this programme, activities in each of the nine areas above have taken place or are planned. A number of steps have been taken at the subregional level as regards the management of water and land resources and alternative energy sources, with backing from a variety of bilateral and multilateral partners. A scheme to set up a conflict prevention system in the subregion is currently being designed. The IGAD secretariat has expanded its network to include 72 national institutions. Plans for an integrated information system have been drawn up and a number of information system-related initiatives have been taken. The overall aim of the activities planned is to increase capacity to mobilize financial resources for the various activities undertaken.

37. The report gives no indication of any initiatives to strengthen links and synergy with other environmental and sustainable development conventions or to assist countries in the integration of national action programmes into their national development strategies.

2. Consultative process in support of the implementation of the subregional action programme and partnership agreements concluded with developed country parties and other interested entities

38. In keeping with political decisions taken in the subregion, the private sector and civil society are involved in the accomplishment of IGAD's mission. IGAD has therefore involved non-governmental organizations and grass-roots community organizations fully in the formulation and execution of the subregional action programme. The result has been to highlight the need for a review of the subregional programme structures and consider possible links between national action programmes and the subregional programme that emphasize the role to be played by non-governmental organizations, grass-roots communities and other constituencies in civil society.

39. Consultations with developed countries take place in such settings as IGAD's partners' forum, the committee of ambassadors, including representatives of regional, international and United Nations organizations, the project implementation committee, the subregional facilitation committee, support for the subregional strategy and the regional indicative programme.

3. Financial allocations to support Convention implementation by affected country parties of the subregion, and technical and financial assistance received or needed, with an indication of needs and order of priority

40. The full IGAD membership has embarked upon the establishment of national funds for combating desertification, and has progressed to varying degrees. With backing from the Global Mechanism, a subregional facilitation fund to strengthen existing partnerships between IGAD and forces for development is also being established. The member countries have undertaken, in accordance with a decision taken at the IGAD Summit in Khartoum in November 2000, to provide local contributions.

41. A meeting of experts followed by a ministerial meeting on the establishment of a framework for partnerships and better means of combating land degradation and poverty in the IGAD subregion, and on ways of supporting the implementation of national action programmes and the subregional programme, was held in December 2001.

42. Activities carried out as part of the subregional action programme over the period under consideration are being financed by a variety of bilateral and multilateral partners.

4. Consideration and evaluation of benchmarks and indicators used to measure progress

43. No action has been taken in this area since the submission of the previous report.

E. Southern Africa

1. Areas of cooperation under the programme and measures taken or planned

44. The subregional action programme for southern Africa, coordinated by the SADC Environment and Land Management Sector (SADC ELMS), concentrates on seven main areas of subregional cooperation:

(a) capacity-building;

(b) strengthening of early warning systems;

(c) cooperation for the sustainable development of shared natural resources and ecosystems;

(d) information gathering, processing and exchange;

(e) development of the transfer of appropriate technology at the community level;

(f) development of alternative sources of energy; and

(g) socio-economic issues.

45. Through the SADC ELMS bodies, the countries in the subregion have continued to work to put the subregional action programme into operation in the priority areas identified. Activities are being carried out under the first phase of the programme, "action to combat land degradation and desertification", and four centres of excellence have been selected for grass-roots community capacity-building, training and programme formulation methods. Special attention has been paid to the four priority areas identified by member States, namely rural energy, rangeland management, environmental law and local planning. Matters relating to appropriate technology and traditional knowledge are also included in planning schedules.

46. The subregion has continued to work on the management of transboundary natural resources, carrying out the specific activities identified under the Kalahari-Namib initiative with support from a variety of development partners.

47. SADC ELMS has continued to provide the 14 member countries with support in the design and execution of national action programmes, half of which have been approved or adopted by the respective national parliaments. The countries have been encouraged to internalize and integrate their programmes into a long-term development planning and budgeting exercise.

48. The subregion is also actively engaged in preparations for the World Summit on Sustainable Development to be held in Johannesburg in August/September 2002. Land degradation and desertification have been selected as two of the key issues of interest to the subregion for consideration at the Summit.

2. Consultative process in support of the implementation of the subregional action programme and partnership agreements concluded with developed country parties and other interested entities

49. The workshop on resource mobilization for the implementation of the Convention held in Kenya in October 2000, which was organized in conjunction with the IGAD countries and with backing from the Global Mechanism, provided a setting for concerted efforts to identify existing technical and financial mechanisms. A follow-up meeting on partnerships and capacity-building for Convention implementation in southern Africa was held in May 2001; one of its recommendations was for the establishment of a subregional facilitation fund, and a contact group has been set up for the purpose. The SADC Council of Ministers has approved guidelines for access to the fund, which is expected to be launched at a subregional workshop scheduled for July 2002.

3. Financial allocations to support Convention implementation by affected country parties of the subregion, and technical and financial assistance received or needed, with an indication of needs and order of priority

50. The facilitation fund to be set up in the subregion will be one of the mechanisms used to finance subregional action programme activities to combat land degradation and poverty using

seed resources supplied by the Global Mechanism. Funds have also been secured from two multilateral partners to launch and carry out a transboundary project in the Kalahari-Namib region.

4. Consideration and evaluation of benchmarks and indicators used to measure progress

51. As part of the work of its Multidisciplinary Scientific and Technical Consultative Committee set up in 1998, SADC has continued to seek financing for the implementation of an annual programme.

III. PROGRESS ON THE REGIONAL ACTION PROGRAMME

52. This section summarizes progress on the regional action plan for the implementation of the Convention in Africa and evaluates activities carried out since the submission of the first report in 1999.

A. Areas of cooperation under the programme and measures taken or planned

53. In accordance with article 13 of the regional annex for Africa, which provides an overall definition of the priority areas in which the regional action programme offers comparative advantages, the Pan-African Conference held in Burkina Faso in March 1997 identified eight areas in which cooperation should take place at the regional scale:

(a) rational management of the water resources of the major transboundary river, lake and hydrogeological basins;

(b) agroforestry and soil conservation;

(c) rational management of rangelands and promotion of fodder crops;

(d) ecological monitoring, natural resources mapping, remote sensing and early warning systems;

(e) promotion of renewable energy sources and environment-friendly technologies;

(f) sustainable farm production systems; and

(g) promotion of an enabling environment for efforts to combat classification and capacity-building.

54. Activities relating to the regional action programme process have consisted basically in the launching of activities under the six thematic programme networks established at the African ministerial conference held in preparation for the third Conference of the Parties in Kenya, in September and October 1999, which was organized jointly by the Convention secretariat and the United Nations Environment Programme.

55. During the period under consideration, three thematic programme networks have been launched at workshops, where each of the institutional focal points designated in 1999 to coordinate the establishment and activities of the networks was able to bring together the African regional institutions specializing in the appropriate domains, selected national focal points for the Convention, and other partners concerned, to draw up a programme of work indicating priority activities for the short and medium term and the roles of the various entities concerned.

56. The first thematic network, on integrated water resource management in the major transboundary river, lake and hydrogeological basins, was launched in November/December 2000 in Ghana with financial backing from Italy, Norway and Canada. It is coordinated by the SADC water sector coordinating unit. Participants have selected three areas, namely water resources information systems, scientific and technical cooperation, and institutional and legislative aspects. The priority activities selected for the short and medium term are as follows:

(a) support for regional and subregional initiatives promoting pilot projects in the rational use and management of water resources in the major river, lake and hydrogeological basins as part of efforts to apply poverty reduction strategies;

(b) support for regional and subregional initiatives promoting synergies between the key conventions that emerged from the Rio Conference; and

(c) participation in regional and subregional initiatives to mobilize financial resources for the implementation of subregional integrated water resource management programmes and plans of action. There are plans, for example, to provide technical backing for the preparations for the round table of donors supporting the plan of action of the West African conference on integrated water resource management, and for the regional strategy of the SADC plan of action on integrated water resource management.

57. The second thematic network, on agroforestry and soil conservation, was launched in Togo in June 2002 with financial backing from Finland and Germany. It is coordinated by the CILSS Institut du Sahel. The activities selected by participants are as follows:

(a) support for regional and subregional initiatives to promote the domestication, processing and marketing of agroforestry products of social and economic value to the African Parties;

(b) support for regional and subregional initiatives promoting synergies between the conventions relating to the environment and sustainable development;

(c) collection, analysis and dissemination of traditional know-how; and

(d) participation in activities under the African land and water management initiative launched by the Global Environmental Fund with the World Bank, the United Nations Environment Programme and the United Nations Development Programme.

58. The third network, on rational rangeland management and the promotion of forage crops, was launched in Lesotho in November 2002, with financial backing from Germany and Finland; it is coordinated by its focal point, the OAU Interafrican Bureau for Animal Resources. Participants have selected a number of areas for intervention, including improving living conditions for herdsmen, conflict management, analysis of the interaction between cattle herding and the environment, capacity-building, livestock and animal product marketing, and the promotion of appropriate herding practices.

59. The other three regional action programme thematic programme networks will be launched over the biennium 2002-2003:

(a) the network for environmental monitoring, mapping of natural resources, remote sensing and early warning systems. Discussions were held in Abidjan in January 2002 with the African Organization of Cartography and Remote Sensing, which serves as the institutional focal point for the network; the launching meeting is scheduled for September 2002;

(b) the network to promote renewable energy sources and environment-friendly technologies, coordinated by the National Agency for Renewable Energy in Tunisia, in close cooperation with Environmental and Development Action in the Third World (ENDA) in Senegal;

(c) the network to promote sustainable farming systems, coordinated by the Consultative Advisory Committee on Semi-Arid Food Grain Research and Development of the OAU Scientific, Technical and Research Commission (OAU/STRC-SAFGRAD), Burkina Faso.

B. Consultative process in support of the preparation and implementation of the regional action programme and partnership agreements

60. Advisory meetings organized by the Convention secretariat in Bonn in March/April 2000 preceded the launching of the three thematic networks; they brought together the institutional focal points of the networks, the Convention secretariat's Regional Coordination Unit, key network members and consultants, and enabled the tasks involved in launching the three networks to be identified and apportioned.

61. The recommendations of the launching workshops held during the reporting period emphasize the need to consolidate and pool the information available in the three areas and establish cooperative links among network members. The aim of the networks is to harness scientific and technical potential in Africa to help give effect to the Convention. The workshop recommendations also make it clear that the institutional focal points and network members will be putting forward projects for inclusion in the "regional and subregional initiatives in support of Convention implementation" portfolio.

62. Network members have already put forward a number of projects to do with water resources and rational rangeland management. Other subregional and regional members of the operational thematic networks are expected to do likewise in order to identify needs in the region and carry out activities in close collaboration with development partners.

63. To improve communications and exchanges of information among the six institutional focal points of the thematic networks, network members and the Regional Coordination Unit, consultations have been entered into with the Sahara and Sahel Observatory (OSS) and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) on the establishment of a system for pooling and circulating information under the regional action programme.

64. In cooperation with the African Development Bank (ADB) and the Convention secretariat, an information and awareness-raising seminar for managerial staff in operational departments was held in Abidjan in April 2001 on progress in the various processes for implementation of the Convention in African countries and the involvement of the African Development Bank in the process. The aim of the meeting was to inform participants of the progress that has been made in Africa and identify ADB involvement in national, subregional and regional programmes.

65. At the national level it has been agreed to work closely with ADB to urge African countries to take account of efforts to combat desertification as they draw up poverty reduction strategies, and to regard such efforts as a priority component of national development plans.

66. At the regional level, arrangements have been made to put the joint ADB/Desertification Convention work programme, drawn up in 2001 to give effect, in particular, to the cooperation agreement between ADB and the Convention, into operation, incorporating proposals for the launching workshops for three thematic networks held during the period under consideration.

67. The Convention secretariat, through its attendance at various regional meetings and its contacts with African regional institutions, is facilitating the process of taking account of and, wherever possible, incorporating the formulation and implementation of the regional action programme by means of the initiatives currently under way in Africa (for example the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), regional preparations for the World Summit on Sustainable Development and the programme of action of the Community of Sahel and Saharan States).

C. Financial allocations to support programme implementation by affected country parties of the region, and technical and financial assistance received or needed

68. African country parties have allocated no financial resources for the programme implementation process. Over the period under consideration the process has, however, received financial or technical support from various bilateral partners and ADB. This has enabled the three thematic networks to begin working and allowed the process to be facilitated at the regional level by the Regional Coordination Unit. Talks are in progress between ADB and the

Convention secretariat on the mobilization of future financing, additional financial resources, and the identification of innovative funding approaches appropriate to regional-level desertification control projects.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

69. Subregional intergovernmental organizations, serving as liaison centres to coordinate the formulation and implementation of subregional action programmes, were asked in the explanatory note and help guide (ICCD/CRIC(1)/INF.4) to provide information on the key thematic topics defined in decision 1/COP.5 as appropriate; the information received suggests the following conclusions.

70. Participatory processes involving civil society, non-governmental and community organizations are subregional action programme priorities in most subregions. The reports indicate that Convention implementation in the subregions has taken account of all the parties involved and that the subregional programmes have been drawn up in collaboration with member States and with considerable input from sectors of civil society. Strengthening the role of civil society is also, broadly speaking, one of the activities planned for coming years.

71. As part of programme implementation, a variety of coordinating and steering mechanisms have been set up or are planned with a view to monitoring the execution of scheduled activities and ensuring that they are both participatory and effective.

72. The process of mobilizing and coordinating resources, both national and international, was made easier in all subregions over the period under consideration by the Global Mechanism, through workshops bringing together representatives of the countries and other entities involved. Creation of subregional facilitation funds is planned in three subregions. It would appear, however, that for the moment these funds have at their disposal only seed resources which would not yet really allow the planned activities to be carried out. In the future, therefore, long-term partnership agreements will have to be concluded for that purpose.

73. The need to improve links and synergies with other conventions on the environment and sustainable development is mentioned in most of the reports. The priority areas for action identified in four action programmes include topics relating to the three conventions that emerged from the Rio Conference (biodiversity, climate change and action to combat desertification), such as agroforestry and energy. The line managers for the areas concerned will therefore have to follow regional- and international-level activities closely and take part in them.

74. Most of the reports mention steps taken to restore degraded land in the context of pilot transboundary projects that have been initiated or are in progress. Only two emphasize the importance of data collection and exchange, the need for a subregional monitoring network and systems to monitor and evaluate desertification and drought as crucial components of the action programme. One report does mention the lack of priority assigned to the monitoring and evaluation system by national authorities as a major constraint.

75. Regionally, the formulation and implementation of the regional action programme for combating desertification over the reporting period has seen the launching of three thematic networks. The first implementation activities called for in the recommendations adopted at the launching workshops have begun to be put into effect. To function properly, however, the institutional focal points designated in late 1999 to coordinate the networks will need additional technical or financial support. The planned information pooling and circulation system at the Regional Coordination Unit may certainly help to facilitate the work of the thematic networks in Africa. Many specialized African institutions that might potentially play a part in the thematic networks, together with bilateral, regional and multilateral partners, are beginning to show growing interest in this programme, which could play a key role in catalysing positive initiatives to supplement the efforts of States and subregional institutions.